Animal Magnetism

Attraction of Spiritual Leaders

by Francis Story



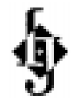
E-mail: bdea@buddhanet.net
Web site: www.buddhanet.net

Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc.

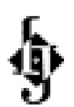


The Attraction of Spiritual Leaders

Francis Story



1997 An Inward Journey Book
Inward Path Publisher
Penang, Malaysia



**AN INWARD JOURNEY BOOK
PUBLISHED BY
INWARD PATH PUBLISHER**

P.O. Box 1034, 10670 Penang, Malaysia
Tel/Fax: 04 890 6696 Email: sunanda@pc.jaring.my

SPECIAL THANKS TO
BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY, SRI LANKA
FOR THE KIND PERMISSION TO REPRINT THIS ESSAY.

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Story Francis
The attraction of spiritual leaders / Francis Story.
ISBN 983-9439-03-0
1. Faith (Buddhism). 2. Buddhism—Doctrines. 1. Title.
294.342

PRINTED FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION

IJ004A: 2,000 COPIES 1997 IJ004B: 2,000 COPIE5 1997

BOOK LAYOUT AND DESIGN BY LIM HOCK ENG

PRINTED IN PENANG, MALAYSIA

Introduction

Faith* is in the mental factor which inclines, pushes the mind onto the wholesome object. If you see a Buddha statue and you wish to put some flowers at its feet, it is the factor of faith which draws your mind to the statue, the representation of the Buddha. If you read a verse of the Dhammapada and experience feelings of joy and peace, then again the faith mental factor plays the role of lifting your mind up to the Dhamma (as a non-Buddhist might either not read the verse at all, or else not appreciate the Dhamma in it).

In insight meditation the wholesome object on which faith is directed to is the understanding of mental and physical phenomena, of their causal relationship and their universal nature of being impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self. Faith is the confidence that thrusts the investigating mind with right understanding first onto the unique and universal characteristics of mind and matter, and ultimately on Nibbana.

* In Pall: *saddha*. According to the analysis of Buddhist psychology the characteristic of faith is to place confidence In or to trust; its function to clarify, as a water-clearing gem causes muddy water to become clear or it's function is to set forth as one might set forth to cross a flood. Faith is manifested as non-fogginess i.e. the removal of the mind's impurities, or as resolution. Its proximate cause is something to place faith in.

Faith is vital in any spiritual endeavour. It is because of faith that effort can be exerted, mindfulness established, concentration and understanding attained. Like the foundation of a building it carries all that which is above it, but is less conspicuous, less distinguished by itself, compared to such marvellous mental factors like mindfulness, concentration or wisdom.

Faith has to be monitored! The agency which controls and balances out faith is understanding, or wisdom. Unlike mindfulness which is always good, faith can take you onto wrong tracks if associated with unwholesome intentions. Even if faith is put on a wholesome object, for example on the suttas or a capable meditation teacher, it can be excessive and thus lead you to do all kinds of weird things. Faith has the function to clarify the mind. It is compared to the gem which purifies muddied water. That is a very attractive mental quality and sometimes taken as an end in itself.

An example: In a meditation centre a yogi is sitting for a long time at the foot of the altar, gazing into the beautiful face of the statue. The yogi is enthralled by it, wrapped in blissful feelings of faith. Although she or he has a wholesome state of mind,

it is stuck on a pleasant inner experience, unable to observe and investigate the arising thoughts, feelings, sensation, etc. with mindful awareness and thus progress to an insight meditation proper. Because understanding faculty is lacking the yogi stagnates within a limited achievement of mental development. True, it is better to be lost gazing at a statue than, say, being lost in greed or despair playing one's fortune on the stock market.

Based on his vast experience in teaching insight mediation Sayadaw U Pandita feels that Buddhists in the West tend to be excessive in wisdom faculty, while those in Asia are likely to overdo in faith faculty. A Westerner might thus be too inquisitive and critical to ever closely follow the instructions of the teacher, and stick to her or him through all ups and downs of the practice. Asians on the other hand might get stuck on worshipping all the monks and nuns they see, neglecting thereby their own mental development through meditation.

And of course there can be excesses not only in individuals but in groups too. The cases of spiritual teachers and groups succumbing to the seduction of cult worship are legion. There are gross cases like the Thai monk who enjoyed posing, like a film star and was hailed as being, an Arahant (photographs of him hung in a thousand living rooms) only to turn out to have had secret affairs with his female followers.

More interesting, and I think more challenging to be detected and understood, are the subtler aspects of personality cult, occurring right in the midst of our community and our hearts. Can we have a good hard look at our own idiosyncrasies, for example our tendency to put those whom we consider noble and good up on a pedestal? Isn't it absolutely fascinating to see how excessive faith and respect can affect our natural behaviour, as it is so often seen when meditators go to interviews moving awkwardly and unnaturally, and experiencing non too often a blank and stupid mind, simply because they are overwhelmed by feelings when reporting to a senior monk?

Exactly what happens when faith takes over our capacity to appraise in a healthy way a given interaction or teacher-student relationship? Let us use a concept from Western psychology to shed more light into this area.

Western psychology says that the human psyche has a powerful inherent tendency to project aspects

of one's mind onto people and things outside. Say you are alone at night in a hut in the hills. After a while you get frightened, but instead of only having the real fear within yourself, you project it onto the surroundings and suddenly the dark corners or the rattling of the wind become carriers of your fear and thus turn into threatening objects. Next morning when the fear abates, the corners will be just corners again and the wind sing pleasantly.

Even more dramatic in consequences are our projections onto other people. Let's say you enjoy gossiping. Instead of fully acknowledging your habit you project it on other people, detecting the fault which actually exists to some degree in yourself, only in others. And this happens with all kinds of character traits, be it stinginess, anger, greed, jealousy, insecurity, etc.

Think of what irritates you most in people you dislike. The chances are that these are aspects which you don't dare to acknowledge in yourself, as admitting to them seems to be too painful.

Projections are a powerful cause of confusion and suffering, in our relationships. Projections permeate all of our human interactions on all levels. Besides putting one's own negative aspects onto others one also projects frequently positive aspects which, although they are present to some degree in oneself, are not sufficiently cherished and supported.

For example: I have a friend whom I admire highly for her ability to practice intensive meditation with supreme effort. But this is an ability which is present to some degree in myself too. The projection might lead me to look outside rather than to discover, appreciate and develop my own capacity.

This is what often happens when people are under the excessive sway of faith. They see all kinds of fantastic aspects in their idol—aspects which are more often unreal than real—instead of putting their faith into their own dormant abilities to accomplish outstanding moral and mental achievements.

The cure for all projections is to take them back, to repossess them, or, what this process is usually called in psychology, to *integrate* them. For an exercise write down three negative characteristics of the person you dislike most. Then jot down three positive aspects of the teacher or friend you admire most. Now take these six aspects back to

yourself: See where and when you display these unacknowledged habits unconsciously and give them some space in your heart. Work with them as soon as you notice yourself judging somebody's behaviour as being way off. Consider where you act in exactly the same terms. Look at the admired qualities in your friend and try to appreciate the roots of these qualities as they are present in yourself.

Whether you investigate faith according to Buddhist theory or Western psychology you will find that this single mental factor is much more complex than a one line definition might suggest. We have to contemplate faith, its characteristics, actions, influences, its manifestation and various appearances in changing contexts, to become familiar with it and be able to use it in its greatest potential. Faith is the indispensable foundation stone of any growth in mindfulness, concentration and wisdom, which are the factors to propel us to Nibbana. If faith is misunderstood and misapplied all the successive factors are hindered in their development, and Nibbana, the supreme freedom, cannot be reached.

Francis Story's essay discusses faith, and the abuses of it, in the context of religious groups and practices. If you think such abuses occur only with others, you have already missed the point.

Bodhisāra

Penang, Sept 1997

devotion to the buddha

There could be no question that the Bhikkhu Vakkali was devoted to the Buddha: his adoration was patent for all to see[1]. Whether the Blessed One was preaching, meditating or walking, the eyes of Bhikkhu Vakkali were always fixed upon him, raptly. Just as the eyes of a lover devour the form of the beloved, so the gaze of the Bhikkhu dwelt rapturously on the majestic features of the Enlightened One.

The Buddha was not pleased. Calling Vakkali to him in the midst of the assembly, he said: 'Why do you constantly gaze at this body of mine, which is transitory, subject to suffering and without essence? Why do your eyes constantly dwell on

1 See commentary to Itivutaka section 92.

this corporeal form, which is nothing but a sack filled with impurities? Better would it be for you to seek out a forest retreat and there strive earnestly to gain that liberation which brings all formations to an end.'

And giving him a subject of meditation he dismissed the monk. The Bhikkhu thereupon retired to the jungle, strove earnestly for insight, and after some time duly attained Arahantship.

Take now the case of the Venerable Sariputta. He declared, not boastfully but as a matter of fact, for the instruction of other monks, that upon examining himself he found that there could be no event which would move him to sorrow, grief or despair.

'But,' he was asked, 'would not a change in the Teacher cause you sorrow, grief and despair?'

'Not even a change in the Teacher would do that,' the Venerable Sariputta replied. 'I should wish that the Teacher would remain with us, for the benefit of many, for the welfare of many, out of compassion for the world; but his passing would not cause me sorrow and despair.' And the Buddha approved of his answer. Yet this same Sariputta was by no means lacking in reverence.

These stories, which are just two out of many, show vividly the Buddha's attitude towards cults of personality. From the beginning, it was not the Teacher that was important, but the Teaching. Bhakti, or devotion, has its place in Buddhism, but it is a very minor one compared with the part it plays in other religions. In India the personality of the Guru was all important, as it still is today.

But, in his celebrated advice to the Kalamas, the Buddha warned against excessive adulation: 'Do not believe anything,' he said, 'merely on the authority of a teacher.' Even his own Doctrine had not to be accepted just because he, the Buddha, a teacher of outstanding personality, proclaimed it. The Dhamma was to be accepted after mature reflection, when its truth was discerned and its practice seen to be for the good and well-being of all. Unreasoning enthusiasm could never lead to the Right Understanding which is the first requirement of the Noble Eightfold Path. Man is too prone to be carried away by unreflecting zeal, often with very sad results to himself and others. Buddhism teaches that we should develop our judgment by exercising it at all times, correcting and modifying it where necessary and applying

only the highest and most exacting standards to whatever is offered for our appraisal.

An example of this approach is found in the story of how an eminent layman, the General Siha, was converted to Buddhism. Up to then he had been a lay disciple of the Niganthas, or Naked Ascetics. He went to the Buddha on behalf of the Niganthas, declaring that he could overcome the Buddha in argument. When he failed to do so, and the Blessed One had expounded his own doctrine, Siha became so firmly convinced of its truth that he wished to take refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha on the spot.

Any other teacher would have been overjoyed at the triumph, for Siha was a prominent and influential man. But the Buddha restrained him. Instead of welcoming him into the fold with eagerness and making a loud public proclamation of the event, the Buddha very coolly said:

'Now, householder, make a proper investigation. Proper investigation is right in the case of well-known men like yourself.'

Furthermore, he made it a condition that Siha should continue supporting the Naked Ascetics, which he did. When they visited his house for alms, Siha duly fed them, but of his own volition he refused to admit them beyond the outer court, to show that his act was one of simple charity, since he no longer believed in their teachings. The Niganthas suffered much chagrin on this account, but it could not be helped; any other way of treating them would have been insincere on the part of Siha.

Cults of personality take many forms. All the world religions centre about one prominent figure, and to the casual observer it might seem that Buddhism is no exception. But, rightly understood, this is far from being the case. The historical Buddha, the Buddha of our age, Gotama, is unique; but he is not unique in prehistory. He always referred to himself as the Tathagata, meaning One who has gone thus; that is, in the way of previous Buddhas. He claimed only to be the rediscoverer of the ancient way, the ancient truth (*sanantana-dhamma*) that had been proclaimed by innumerable Enlightened Ones before him. When asked his lineage, he replied that it was to this line of World Teachers that he belonged; his Sakyan ancestry, noble as it was, meant nothing to him, for he had chosen his own ancestral line, the lineage of those who had Gone Forth to homelessness and had set the Wheel of the Dhamma rolling in previous world cycles, for the welfare of all beings.

How did the Buddha wish others to regard him? His answer is clear: 'He who sees me sees the Dhamma; he who sees the Dhamma sees me.' The personality of the Teacher had in a very real sense become identified with the Teaching. Realizing that, as the Buddha insisted over and over again, the body and mental formations even of the Tathagata were impermanent, bound to dissolve and pass away, the processes of the five aggregates[2] being the same, in that respect for all, we should look upon personality as a very evanescent phenomenon. The Dhamma, on the other hand, is eternal.

'Whether Tathagatas arise or do not arise, this nature of things continues, this relatedness of phenomena, this regularity of phenomena, this law of conditionality[3].'

In this case, a Tathagata had arisen, he had realized the truth, and the truth transcended his mortal personality.

---

[2] The five aggregates are body, perception, feeling, mental formation and consciousness.

[3] The Buddha says that things arise according to certain universal laws independent of the presence of a Thatagata who can penetrate and explain them to people (Samyutta ii.xii.20).

tri-kaya concept

The greatly misunderstood Mahayana doctrine of the Trikaya originally issued from this concept. After his Parinibbana, the Buddha continued to live in his doctrine; hence the DHARMAKAYA, or Body of the Law. The body in which he taught it, the NIRMANAKAYA, or Body of Manifestation, was not the supernatural docetic body it came to be regarded as later on; it was simply the material aggregate of his impermanent processes of the five aggregates.

The SAMBHOGAKAYA, or Body of Bliss, was simply the mental formations that continued to function in him after the defilements were extinguished so long as he continued to live (*sopadisesa-nibbana*). The mystical dogma of the Trikaya around which so much confusion has arisen was a later elaboration of an idea that had been taken over from the simple words of the Buddha quoted above: 'He who sees the Dhamma sees me.' His words were a direct statement of fact: as an ego-driven current of personality, the

ascetic Gotama had ceased to exist. What remained was Bodhi, the supreme insight-wisdom, (*ñana-dassana*) embodied in the remainder of a current of existence that was one with the Eternal Law. A man is what he thinks; the real part of him is just his mental activity.

The Buddha did not attract followers by the display of supernatural power. To do so would have been, in his view, putting himself in unworthy competition with others who could do the same, if not cheating. He did not seek to impress by miracles; his teachings went beyond them. There are certain paranormal powers that can be cultivated by anyone who has a mind to obtain them. Occasionally, indeed, the Buddha and his disciples resorted to them, but only when the people 'demanded a sign', and their materialism blinded them to a truth that was not supported by spectacular psychic or physical demonstrations. But in general, he condemned such exhibitions; first, because they did not prove anything, except that supernormal powers exist, and secondly, because they are a hindrance on the true way, too often giving rise to pride, self-delusion and the craving for renown.

Devadatta

A sad example of this is the case of Devadatta. He was a man who wanted to turn Buddhism into a personality cult—with himself as the Personality. Very naively he revealed his true intentions when, asking the Buddha to impose on the Sangha a rule against meat eating and other fashionable asceticisms, he said: 'People admire austerity.' Indeed they did, and there were many in the Buddha's time who took advantage of this.

Even some sophists who taught that there is no continuation of existence after death in any form, and that there is no fruit of good or bad actions, practised extreme asceticisms. Why they did so must always remain an enigma to us, since even if the lay followers admired their painful way of life they could hardly have been impressed by the inconsistency of their thought. The idea of torturing oneself for the mere sake of doing so must surely have appeared strange even to Brahmins.

But Devadatta had clearly forgotten the Buddha's first sermon, in which he stigmatized self-mortification as a way that was painful, unworthy and low. He was a man possessed by the craving for honour and fame. And, unfortunately for him, he was one who had also had great success in cultivating the lower forms of supernatural powers (*iddhi-bala*). His driving force was ambition—the ambition of the personality cult. Its culmination was his unholy alliance with Ajatasattu which led to the downfall of them both. Devadatta attempted to take the life of the Buddha. Ajatasattu, with more success, killed his own Father, the saintly king. Greatly pitying him, the Buddha later said: 'If that prince had not killed his father, he could have obtained the highest fruits of the Way in this very life.' For Ajatasattu was endowed with good predispositions, and afterwards became one of the Buddha's lay followers. But, carried away by the madness of ambition he had committed a deed, one of the four grave kammic actions (*garuka kamma*), which made it impossible for him to attain the Path and Fruit of Arahantship in the same life, and perhaps not for many lives to come.

blind faith

According to Buddhist psychology (and shall I be accused of bigotry if I say that I know of no psychology more penetrating or precise?) an excess of faith (*saddha*) is accompanied by a corresponding deficiency in wisdom. The critical faculty and the capacity to believe must be justly balanced to produce a well integrated and mature personality. Now faith is an inseparable element in devotion. So what are we to say of religions which place these two characteristics, faith and devotion, above all others? Yet that is exactly what most religions do, and there are even some forms of Buddhism that are not exempt from this reproach.

When Kierkegaard (following Tertullian) cried in anguish, "I believe, because it is absurd!" he was stating more defiantly the position of the mystic who prays, "Lord, I believe; help thou my

unbelief!" Today we see the disintegration of great world religions in which dogma after dogma is being painfully discarded, until only the personality of the founder is left.

When religion has reached that stage, whatever name it may bear, it denotes nothing more than the label of a devotee of some particular personality. The Zoroastrian[4] who does not believe in any of Zoroaster's teachings or pretensions is just somebody who has a reverence for Zoroaster as a person, who tries to rationalise it by claiming that Zoroaster was the only teacher who proclaimed the brotherhood of man, or taught us to love our neighbour as ourselves, or to return good for evil, regardless of the fact that there have been innumerable other religious leaders who have given the same exhortations. Zoroastrianism then is nothing more than the personality cult of Zoroaster.

Whereas Zoroastrians formerly believed, in all sincerity, that Zoroaster was a god, or the son of god, or a prophet of god, and that he worked miracles which proved it, and gave moral teachings the world had never received before, and had not equalled since, our hypothetical modern Zoroastrian believes none of these things. He may not even believe that there is a God. He does cling, pathetically, to the belief that Zoroaster's moral code is superior to all others, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, and that is all. He still continues calling himself a Zoroastrian, and perhaps holds a high position in the Zoroastrian priesthood; but in actuality he is nothing but an uncritical adherent of the personality cult of Zoroaster. A strange situation indeed: but we see its counterpart today in what is happening to the cult that was once rivalled by Manichaeism, but which survived it to become a world religion.

The Buddhist position is very different from this. You cannot have a personality cult without a personality. We may go so far as to say that even if it were to be definitively established that the Buddha was not an historical person, but simply the solar myth which European Indologists at one time believed him to be—even if it were to be proved that the Buddha never existed, still Buddhism would remain. The Dhamma would be scarcely

[4] 'The Zoroastrian' has been taken here as Just a random example for the follower of a religion that centers In a charismatic personality. No discriminating reflection is intended here on Zoroastrianism, ancient or modern.

affected by it, because the doctrine of liberation does not depend upon the Buddha. It rests upon its own intrinsic truth, a truth which can be proved, 'by each for himself'. The Dhamma would remain what it is—the supreme evidence of man's power to transcend ignorance and penetrate the real nature of the world; a truth that carries its own confirmation in actual human experience, a realization that can be known, understood and lived, by anyone who cares to make the effort.

In Buddhism, many of the norms of religion are reversed, and in nothing more than this: that it is not the Buddha whose existence proves the truth of Buddhism; it is the truth of Buddhism which proves the existence of the Buddha.

animal magnetism

We return now to the cult of the Guru, which I mentioned earlier. In the main stream of religious thought, spiritual teachers abound. Each has his disciples, who regard him as an incarnation of God or at the very least as a very advanced soul ready to attain union with the universal soul (*param-atman*).

Between the devotees of these gurus there are often sectarian rivalries and some of them show a good deal of pride in being associated with one whom they regard as a manifestation of the Supreme. The teachings of the rival gurus are published; but when we read them, the feature that impresses us most is their sameness. Each one says precisely the same thing, in almost exactly the same way; and most of the teachings which are found to be so inspiring by others are nothing but threadbare clichés. When you have read one of them, you have read all. Philosophically, they are negligible, and as spiritual instruction valueless.

Confronted by this phenomenon, we are bound to ask ourselves: What is the secret of the immense hold these teachers have over the minds of their followers? How is it that large numbers of intelligent persons, of East and West, are able to listen enraptured for hours while the guru spins out platitude after platitude, repeating over and over again the same formulas, quoting and re-quoting himself and others, endlessy, forever repeating the same hackneyed theme?

The answer, of course, is that the typical ashram is the centre of a personality cult. What the guru says, or does not say, matters nothing. All that matters is his personal magnetism, within the aura of which the critical faculty is lulled into a peaceful euphoria.

Now this personal magnetism is a very real psychic phenomenon, and it can be cultivated. It does not depend upon intelligence, wisdom or personal beauty, although the latter helps considerably in creating an initial sympathy in the devotee. It is rather a something in the nature what Mesmer called 'animal magnetism', a psycho-physical force that can be generated and projected outwards as an adjunct to the will. And this, more than anything else, is the secret of the devotion that surrounds so many teachers who have nothing to teach, so many prophets who have never prophesied, so many miracle workers whose only miracle was to suggest to others that they have seen something that never occurred.

The power to still the minds of others, to impart to them the impression that they have experienced ineffable peace, indescribable bliss this is the magnet that draws people to a guru whose intelligence is hardly equal to the task of producing a third rate religious tract. The devotee sits before the guru and gazes at him in a happy daze; his thoughts are caught up in a luminous cloud, the hard contours of reality dissolve and he feels himself absorbed, all his petty personal cares vanish away with his lost sense of identity, floating in a vibrant field of love, the love of the guru embracing him, and his own love going out to the guru who is God. It is the apotheosis of the personality cult.

The Buddhist Bhikkhu sets out, by invitation, to preach the Dhamma. He carries in his hand a large palm fan, and when he delivers his discourse he holds the fan before his face. This is an ancient tradition of preaching Dhamma in every Buddhist country. All the time he is preaching his eyes are fixed on the fan. He is not orating; he is not, like the Ancient Mariner, fixing anyone with his glittering eye; above all, he is not trying to put his own personality across. If his hearers are to be influenced, it must be only by the Dhamma, by the words of truth penetrating their understanding, being weighed in the balance of their own judgment. In this way the Dhamma is taught. It is the antithesis of the personality cult.

hero worship

Hero worship is a universal tendency, and can be of great benefit if the model chosen is a good one. But very often immature minds are prone to identification with models who represent the baser instincts and give a kind of sanction to violence, lawlessness and rebellion against society or the prevailing order of things. Among young people, and not exclusively of the male sex, the more undeveloped seek identification with the more violent types they see in motion pictures and on television; later, they tend to come under the influence of older men who introduce them to crime.

Others, who desire a more respectable pattern to follow, but are subconsciously activated by the same urge to express themselves in destructive action, may join some subversive political group having as its head a leader who represents all they wish to become. From this category come the groups of political extremists who take part in riots, racial persecutions and terrorism of all kinds. By rationalizing their destructive drives they succeed in convincing themselves that they are in a superior intellectual category compared to the mere criminal gangster.

In fact, they are less honest. The sophisticated youth who worships some blackshirted, topbooted ruffian who claims to have a political philosophy is rather worse off than the boy from a different social level who admires and emulates an underworld character, for he is adding self-deception to his other personality defects. Few young people today are driven into crime by sheer want, as was formerly the case; for the most part, their absorption into the underworld comes about through the desire to emulate some gang leader whom they have chosen for their idol. Exactly the same is the case of the young or not-so-young follower of a political extremist; he seldom has the least conception of where his adopted cult of violence is leading, but is content to follow the figurehead and persuade himself that the aggressive activities he enjoys are motivated by a high purpose, directed towards a worthy end.

Misguided hero worship as the basis of personality cults is responsible for much of the disruption

of present day society. It is unfortunately facilitated by improved means of communication. Ideas soared with a rapidity unknown before, and the personalities of those who initiate them are projected pictorially on cinema and television screens with an almost hypnotically compulsive force. The influence they come to have upon impressionable minds is incalculable; science, with its most sophisticated techniques of evaluating public reactions by statistical surveys is unable to furnish any data on this point, and social psychology can only give indications, some of which are alarming enough.

The people who know most about it are not those concerned with the mental health of the population, but only with selling things—the advertising specialists and publicity experts. They alone are able to gauge the cumulative effect of constantly repeated visual and auditory suggestion, and social psychologists would do well to turn to them for information. The media of mass communication are likely to prove a dangerous liability rather than an asset to mankind if something is not done to check the flow of unwholesome ideas they are increasingly being made to serve.

Books by Francis Story

Francis Story's writings show the result of a successful marriage of a Western inquiring mind and the Eastern philosophy and psychology of Buddha Dhamma. Instead of blindly accepting Buddhist teachings Story digests them, tests them and relates to the reader what deeply relevant lessons he found in texts which are many hundred years old.

Although Francis Story passed away more than twenty years ago, his studies and essays remain modern and are a lively source of inspiration and understanding.

The Buddhist Publication Society in Kandy published the complete work of Francis Story in three volumes:

Volume I THE BUDDHIST OUTLOOK
Collected Writings
It contains wide ranging and brilliantly written essays, dialogues and poems on 382 pages.

Volume 2 REBIRTH AS DOCTRINE AND EXPERIENCE
Essays and Case Studies.
All of Francis Story's writings on death and rebirth in one book of 286 pages.

Volume 3 DIMENSIONS OF BUDDHIST THOUGHT
Collected Essays contributed to the serial publication The Wheel and Bodhi Leaves, 454 pages.